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Title: a dusty little book

Author: Clark Ashton Smith

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The Abomination of
Desolation -+-

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The desert of Soom is
said to lie at the world's
unchartable extreme,
between the lands that
are little known and
those that are scarcely
even conjectured. It is
dreaded by travellers, for
its bare and ever-moving
sands are without oases,
and a strange horror is
rumored to dwell among
them. Of this horror,
many tales are told, and
nearly all of the tales
are different. Some say
that the thing has
neither visible form nor
audible voice, and others
that it is a dire chimera
with multitudinous heads
and horns and tails, and
a tongue whose sound is
like the tolling of bells in
deep funereal vaults.

Of
the caravans and solitary
wanderers who have
ventured amid the sands
of Soom, none has
returned without a story
to tell; and some have
never returned at all, or
have come back with
brains devoured to
madness by the terror
and vertigo and delirium

of infinite empty space.

..Yes, there are many tales, of a thing that follows furtively or with the pandemonium of a thousand devils, of a thing that roars or whispers balefully from the sand or from the wind, or stirs unseen in the coiling silence; or falls from the heavens like a crushing incubus: or yawns like a sudden pit before the feet of the traveller...

But once on a time there were two lovers who came to the desert of Soom, and who had occasion to cross the sterile sands. They knew not the evil rumor of the place; and, since they had found an abiding Eden in each other's eyes, it is doubtful if they even knew that they were passing through a desert.

And they alone, of all who have dared this fearsome desolation, have had no tale to relate of any troublous thing, of any horror that followed or lurked before them, either seen or unseen, audible or heard; and for them there was no chimera, no yawning pit nor incubus. And never, never could they comprehend the stories that were told by less fortunate wayfarers.